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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000042

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NCE, EUR/RPM, AND EUR/UMB  
NSC FOR DAMON WILSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2021  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [BO](#) [UP](#) [LO](#)  
SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA ORGANIZING V-4 ELECTION MONITORING TO  
BELARUS, BUT NEEDS FINANCIAL SUPPORT

REF: 05 BRATISLAVA 924

Classified By: DCM Lawrence R. Silverman for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Director of the MFA's Third Territorial Division (including Eastern Europe and Russia) Stefan Rozkopal presented us January 18 additional information about V-4 involvement in OSCE election monitoring missions for Belarus' March 19 Presidential vote and requested U.S. financial assistance. Rozkopal also noted that there had been little progress on the OSCE's Needs Assessment Mission (NAM), which -- although by practice conducted three months before elections -- has still not received Lukashenko's permission to enter Belarus. While Slovakia is limited to 10 percent of the OSCE mission and would like to send observers, Rozkopal is unsure whether Slovakia has the money or the staff to establish a presence. He requested that the U.S. help finance a small but meaningful V-4 delegation, albeit directly and discreetly.

WATCH BIASED ELECTIONS FOR DOLLARS A DAY

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¶2. (C) The MFA, like Slovak NGOs and many others in the international community, will be focusing most of its resources on the virtually concurrent Ukrainian elections. Rozkopal said that Slovakia, as the designated V-4 lead on Belarus, has been in contact with its partners and has determined that there is interest in making a meaningful V-4 contribution to the OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring mission, but that the V-4 lacks the money to make this happen. The V-4 observers -- who would likely wear a pin or patch with an additional V-4 emblem -- would cost approximately USD 2500 per short term observer (STO). As such, the V-4 could stand up a relatively respectable presence of 16 observers (four from each V-4 country) for a total of USD 40,000. As of now, the GOS had funding only for two MFA observers. A smaller donation of USD 20,000 would provide for a mission of 8 observers (two from each V-4 country). If the U.S. can contribute this funding, Slovakia would then approach a Slovak NGO to coordinate the V-4 observers as part of the OSCE contingent.

U.S. ASSISTANCE WOULD HAVE TO BE DISCREET

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¶3. (C) Speaking of the difficulties already inherent in staffing such a mission, Rozkopal noted that no Slovak NGO has yet been identified as a suitable partner for this mission. Former Ambassador to the U.S. Martin Butora's NGO Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) can no longer receive visas, Pontis Foundation has been "black listed," and Obcianske Oko ("Civic Eye") is tied down by its role in the Ukrainian elections as part of the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO). Given the sensitivities that Belarus has already voiced about U.S. and EU criticism in the lead-up to a possible joint demarche (see para 5), Rozkopal said that any funding would have to be done quietly, and either government-to-government or government-to-NGO. Rozkopal, who believed that redistributing any donation via the MFA to the NGOs staffing the STO mission might be problematic for administrative reasons, said he would prefer if the USG or private U.S. funds could direct any assistance directly to the (as yet unnamed) NGO coordinator. Once any contribution was codified, Rozkopal said he and the NGO community would contact V-4 capitals to staff the contingent, which he said could be done relatively quickly and effectively.

¶4. (C) Rozkopal noted that "time is running out fast" and that, as the NAM still has not received permission to enter Belarus. Hypothetically, he wondered whether the OSCE might need to consider "what the point of no return is," i.e., should the OSCE take a stand and publicly announce that it is "too late" for their mission to work due to lack of cooperation from Belarus.

ROZKOPAL ON EU APPROACH TO BELARUS

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¶5. (C) Rozkopal also passed to us a draft EU statement on

Belarus distributed by the Austrian Presidency for the January 19 OSCE Permanent Council meeting, as well as a report on a January 18 meeting between the Austrians and Belarusian Foreign Minister Matynov. The latter document contained a telling phrase: "...(Belarus) was ready to improve relations with the West and the EU in particular and was ready to take any steps. They were ready to discuss everything, except one issue -- Lukashenko remaining as

President." Rozkopal told us that as far as the joint U.S. - EU demarche on Belarus was concerned, his opinion was that the joint demarche would "not make sense" if it were delivered to anyone other than Lukashenko. We countered that the approach needed to be made regardless of recipient; Rozkopal accepted the point.

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